

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Hot Issues – Marshall Area and Kalamazoo River

Issue: News Reports Predict at least Some Kalamazoo Sections to Reopen this Year – Marshall

Background/Status: In media reports in advance of Tuesday's community meeting update on the Enbridge oil spill cleanup, EPA and local officials predict at least some sections of the Kalamazoo River will be reopened this year for recreational use. Since the July 2010 spill, the largest inland waterway spill in U.S. history, 39 miles of the river from the rupture site on Talmadge Creek near Marshall to Morrow Dam in Kalamazoo County, has remained closed to all recreational activities. EPA estimates the pipeline break spilled more than 800,000 gallons of oil. EPA On-Scene Coordinator Ralph Dollhopf in the *Detroit Free Press* said he expects some areas to open this year for recreational use. He said the decision will be made by local health officials in consultation with EPA and state officials.

The *Battle Creek Enquirer* quoted Jim Rutherford, head of the Calhoun County Health Department, who said river reopening, in stages, "will finally be allowed." Rutherford stated: "We still have areas of concentrated submerged oil. But we're seeing some really good momentum." Rutherford said the river is expected to reopen to the public in small steps and said that in the first stage, no significant changes will be apparent. But by mid-summer he said officials expect to see much of the river reopened. He said: "At some point, we have to step back and reclaim the river for recreational activities."

The *Battle Creek* article noted last summer that federal, state and local officials had hoped to at least open a portion of the river for boaters and fishermen but that never materialized as responders discovered a large area of submerged oil. But Rutherford said much more progress has been made in terms of oil collection since then. He stated: "I've been on the river a lot and the vast majority (of the oil) has been removed."

Message:

- EPA is committed to ensuring the river is restored to its pre-spill condition.

Contact: From *Detroit Free Press*, *Battle Creek Enquirer* news reports, John Peterson, OPA, 312-886-9858, peterjohn@epa.gov

Issue: Letter Writer Urges Public to Renew Interest in Enbridge Cleanup – Kalamazoo

Background/Status: Deb Miller a resident of Ceresco, Michigan, 10 miles west of Marshall, sent a letter to the editor of the *Kalamazoo Gazette* urging other residents to show government authorities that cleanup of the Enbridge spill still matters. In her letter published April 12, Miller publicized EPA's April 17th community meeting, noting declining turnouts for previous gatherings. Miller wrote: "... last fall local media reports even alleged that area residents were no longer concerned about the oil cleanup. For many of us impacted residents, this is far from the truth. We are very concerned about our property, wells, health and the future of our river. While portions of the creek and river may look nice on the surface, the fact is, as much as 200 acres of submerged oil remain." She urged her readers: "I hope you will attend this meeting. This is an opportunity for the community to show the unified command agencies ... that even after 630 days, residents are still interested in the status of the cleanup and concerned about future plans for the river and the spill's impact on our communities."

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

FYI: No EPA message

Contact: From *Kalamazoo Gazette* letters-to-the-editor; John Peterson, OPA, 312-886-9858, peterjohn@epa.gov

Issue: Kalamazoo River Hit by Other Spills – Albion and Battle Creek

Background/Status: On April 11, EPA responded to a report of a sheen of petroleum product covering about a seven and a half mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River in Albion, Michigan, 15 miles east of Marshall. The spill was traced to a manhole in front of an abandoned building at the former Union Steel Plant. Petroleum product was seen on the floor leading to a drain trench for the building, which leads out into the river. The previous owner of the building, who used it for drum storage, removed several drums on April 10 and denied any knowledge of how the spill happened. EPA staff estimates there may have been as many as 30 drums stored in the building, although the amount of petroleum product spilled appears to be relatively small. EPA will arrange for disposal of the 12 remaining drums, remove any petroleum residue from the floor leading to the trench and flush the sewer leading to the river to remove any residual oil. Boom was deployed into the river and the spill has been contained. Boom is expected to be in place through this week due to heavy rains that fell during the weekend.

In February, EPA responded to a release of several hundred gallons of home heating oil into a storm sewer that then flowed into the Kalamazoo River near Battle Creek, 17 miles west of Marshall. Sheen had traveled downstream for about 15 miles. EPA provided sampling support, oversight of cleanup efforts, and air monitoring.

Messages:

- On April 11, EPA emergency personnel had to contain a petroleum spill upstream in Albion. A sheen of petroleum product covered about a seven and a half mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River.
- EPA traced the spill to an abandoned building, determined that it was a relatively small release, and placed boom effectively containing the spill.

Contacts: Sonia Vega, Superfund, 651-757-2796, vega.sonia@epa.gov; Stephen Wolfe, Superfund, 440-250-1719, wolfe.stephen@epa.gov

Issue: Portage Creek Removal Action Under Way – Kalamazoo

Background/Status: Portage Creek, located in Kalamazoo, begins at East Cork Street and flows north 1.8 miles to the Kalamazoo River. It is part of the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site. In September 2011, EPA began a removal action, which over the course of 2-3 years will remove 18,000 cubic yards of waste material from the creek, working from upstream to downstream. Wet weather and flooding postponed cleanup activities, which resumed this February. This month, the first and farthest upstream portion of the cleanup was completed. About 1,000 yards of PCB-contaminated soil and sediment, or 20 truckloads, were removed. In early May, EPA expects to begin dredging creek bed sediment in the next portion of the cleanup area. Work will continue to progress downstream toward Upjohn Park this summer, where some of the more contaminated soil and sediment are located.

Message:

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

- After significant weather and flooding delays, a removal action to clean up nearly 2 miles of PCB contamination along Portage Creek in Kalamazoo is now under way.
- The first part of the cleanup was completed this month with 1,000 cubic yards of PCB contaminated soil and sediment removed.
- Work will continue downstream towards Upjohn Park this summer.
- The project is expected to take two to three years to complete.

Contacts: Craig Thomas, Superfund, 312-886-5907, thomas.craig@epa.gov; James Saric, Superfund, 312-886-0992, saric.james@epa.gov

Issue: Bankruptcy Settlement Not Enough to Cover Site Cleanup – Kalamazoo

Background/Status: The Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site includes four disposal areas, five former paper mill properties, and more than 80 miles of the Kalamazoo River and Portage Creek contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls. Cleanup costs for the entire site could reach \$1 billion. A Chapter 11 bankruptcy settlement in 2010 between the United States and Lyondell, the parent company of Millennium Holdings, a Potentially Responsible Party at the site, provided around \$100 million towards site cleanup. Although other PRPs exist, cleanup costs will likely far exceed their available resources, and a large portion of the site cleanup may fall on EPA. EPA expects to select a cleanup plan for the Allied Landfill portion of the site in 2012 and may need to use funds from the bankruptcy settlement to conduct the cleanup there. The landfill is located in Kalamazoo, Michigan. A range of potential cleanup options will be included in the feasibility study for the Allied Landfill, ranging from capping and groundwater monitoring for \$38 million to full excavation and off-site disposal for \$238 million.

Messages:

- There are enormous costs involved in cleaning up the Kalamazoo River site, and one of the main responsible parties has declared bankruptcy.
- Bankruptcy funds may be used for the Allied Landfill portion of the site. A cleanup plan for this portion is expected later this year.
- Various enforcement and funding mechanisms may be necessary to advance a project of this magnitude.
- Cleanup work is continuing at the site with environmental investigations ongoing across 25 miles of the Kalamazoo River and cleanup occurring along two miles of Portage Creek.

Contact: James Saric, Superfund, 312-886-0992, saric.james@epa.gov

Issue: Public Concerns about Brine Disposal Well – Jackson County

Background/Status: EPA will hold a public meeting and hearing in May to discuss a proposed brine disposal injection well in Jackson County, Michigan, 50 miles east of Marshall. Brine waste is generated from oil drilling. Oil development is relatively new in Jackson County. The proposed well called West Bay #22 is the first brine disposal well to be proposed in the county in many years. This would be a Class II well. Michigan already contains about 1,400 Class II wells.

Some 350 people attended a town hall meeting last month and expressed concerns about the well's potential to contaminate drinking water and cause earthquakes and other oil production-related issues. One hundred people came to a related lecture on April 5. The company's application for a second well is still under review by EPA.

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Message:

- Protecting drinking water is EPA's primary goal when issuing brine disposal well permits.
- The proposed well meets EPA's requirements and should not affect underground sources of drinking water or have other significant environmental impact.
- EPA evaluates geological siting, construction and operation for underground injection wells. We do not choose locations and cannot make companies select or use a particular location.
- Due to public interest, EPA is holding an information session and hearing in Jackson County (Brooklyn, Michigan) on May 23.

Contact: Anna Miller, Water, 312-886-7060, miller.anna@epa.gov

Issue: Asian Carp Update - Goss Says Barrier Working – Great Lakes

Background/Status: John Goss, director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality's Asian Carp effort, told a Green Bay, Wisconsin, audience last week the electric barrier in Chicago coupled with efforts on the Illinois River continue to be effective in stopping the fish from reaching Lake Michigan. The state of Michigan along with Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are fighting in federal court to force the Chicago sewage district and Corps of Engineers to seal off the Chicago Waterway System from the Great Lakes. Goss pointed out that only one live Asian carp has been found across the electric fish barrier even though carp genetic material has also been discovered closer to Lake Michigan. Goss said there is no indication any sizeable population of the fish has breached the barrier and established itself close to the lake. Goss spoke April 11 to the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention. Goss said the Obama Administration continues to take the carp threat seriously. He pointed out the federal government has devoted more than \$100 million to shielding the lakes from the carp and plans to spend \$51.5 million this year. The latest plans include stepped-up commercial fishing in the Chicago Waterway and Illinois River and field testing new strategies such as high-pressure underwater guns and pheromones that could lure carp into lethal traps.

Messages:

- EPA is not a party in the Asian carp lawsuit but watches the court case very closely. The Department of Justice will be filing a response on behalf of the federal government's interests.
- EPA is budgeting for Asian carp prevention funds to go to key agencies under the Framework as one of the top priorities under the GLRI Action Plan.
- All of the actions taken by the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ACRCC) lead them to conclude that there is no imminent threat of Asian carp establishing a self-sustaining population in the Great Lakes.
- The federal government has spent \$100 million the last two years on carp prevention, and this year will spend \$50 million with several experimental projects.
- EPA will continue to cooperate with the coordinating committee on field efforts and studies related to Asian carp.
- All this money and effort is yielding results in shielding the Great Lakes from invasive species.

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Contact: From *Green Bay Press-Gazette* article; John Peterson, OPA, 312-886-9858, peterjohn@epa.gov

Hot Issues – Statewide

Issue: Controversial County Road Project Nears Decision Point – Marquette County/UP

Background/Status: On Jan. 23, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality announced it was taking comments on whether the Marquette County Road Commission's permit application for County Road 595 complies with Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act guidelines for inland lakes and streams. Because the proposed road project would have a significant impact on the waters of the United States, it is subject to a CWA Section 404 permit review by EPA. The Agency has 90 days (until April 23) to comment on MDEQ's proposed permit. As part of this review, EPA is responsible for coordinating comments from other federal agencies and incorporating them into a single combined federal response. EPA has already received comments from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

If EPA declines to comment or does not object to the permit, MDEQ can issue a final permit to the Marquette County Road Commission. If EPA objects to the permit, MDEQ has 90 days to address EPA's concerns. If EPA and MDEQ cannot agree whether to issue the permit, then the Marquette County Road Commission would have to seek a permit from the Corps. The road, as proposed, would connect the controversial Kennecott Eagle Rock Mine to the Humboldt Tailings Basin and would require 25 acres of wetland fill and 22 stream crossings.

Previously, Woodland Road LLC applied for a permit to build a 22-mile road primarily for use by Kennecott Mine ore and lumber trucks. Woodland Road impacts would have been very similar to those of the proposed CR-595. EPA, the Corps and FWS all objected to a permit for Woodland Road, and it was subsequently withdrawn.

Currently, the Kennecott mining company is progressing with construction of its Eagle Rock mine by blasting operations to reach the ore vein.

Messages:

- EPA is currently reviewing the state permit application for CR-595 for compliance with Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) guidelines. The Corps and FWS have provided EPA with letters outlining concerns. EPA will incorporate all three federal agencies' comments into a federal comment letter to MDEQ to be sent by April 23. This coordination is pursuant to state assumption of the 404 permitting program.
- CR-595 follows the same general route as Woodland Road, which was rejected by environmental regulators. The impacts to streams and wetlands remain a significant concern.
- Local officials believe that CR-595 is the best alternative.

Contact: Melanie Haveman, Water, 312-886-2255, haveman.melanie@epa.gov; Sue Elston, Water, 312-8866115, elston.sue@epa.gov

Issue: EPA Responds to Illegal Container Dump – Detroit Area

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Background/Status: An EPA OSC responded to Monday afternoon's discovery of several containers illegally disposed of in a wooded area of Bloomfield Township, 25 miles northwest of Detroit. A private citizen reported finding 10-15 drums and three 300-gallon totes containing unknown liquids. Some of the containers were leaking but do not pose a health threat because they are not near a waterbody or in a location frequented by humans. The OSC estimated the containers had been sitting there for at least two years. The OSC and a START contractor secured and stabilized the containers overnight Monday and took several samples that will be analyzed by Wednesday. When results are available, EPA will return to remove the containers.

Messages:

- EPA is committed to protecting the health and safety of local residents and responded quickly to the discovery of leaking containers.

Contact: Jeffrey Lippert, OSC Superfund, 734-308-1695, lippert.jeffrey@epa.gov

Issue: HQ Speaker Received Well at CAG Meeting - Tittabawassee River, Saginaw River and Bay Site – Midland

Background/Status: At Monday night's meeting of the Saginaw-Tittabawassee Rivers Contamination Community Advisory Group, the main speaker was Dr. Helen Dawson, chief of EPA's OSRTI Science Policy Branch in HQ. She spoke on EPA's risk assessment process and its application to dioxin. In her talk she covered: what are dioxins; EPA's risk assessment process; what is a reference dose (RfD); and use of EPA's new dioxin RfD at Superfund sites. She was able to convey this highly technical material in an understandable way. Dr. Dawson fielded many questions but handled them well and received numerous compliments after the meeting. Besides Dr. Dawson's remarks, the meeting agenda featured only two short topics – an update on progress of the design and planning for cleanup that will occur in Segment 1 of the Tittabawassee River this year and an update on EPA's community outreach activities. In addition to the CAG members, several people from the environmental group the Lone Tree Council attended as well as a few other members of the public. The next CAG meeting is scheduled for May 21.

As far as the cleanup, Dow Chemical Co. signed a legal agreement last November requiring it to clean up sediment in Segment 1, a three-mile stretch of the Tittabawassee River next to Dow's Midland plant. Unlike other sections of the river where dioxin and furans are the primary contaminants, sediment in Section 1 is polluted with a number of hazardous chemicals including arsenic, chlorobenzenes, chlorophenols, ethyl parathion, o-phenylphenol, PAHs and DNAPL. Work will begin this summer with the installation of recovery wells within three of the six contamination areas in Segment 1. After the removal is complete, any remaining contaminated sediment will be contained in place or removed in limited circumstances. Wells will remain operational until late fall when recovery will conclude for the season. This spring Dow will also resume assessments of floodplain properties along the Tittabawassee River to determine eligibility for interim exposure controls. Installation of exposure controls started last July at 25 properties.

Messages:

- Cleanup work on the dioxin and other chemical contamination in the Tittabawassee River and floodplain will pick up again this spring.
- EPA is committed to enhanced community involvement at the site. EPA staff meet regularly with community members and stakeholders.

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Contact: Mary Logan, Superfund, 312- 886-4699, logan.mary@epa.gov

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Issue: News Report: Difficult to Show Dioxin Causes Cancer – Saginaw

Background/Status: In a *Saginaw News* article by reporter Lindsay Knake published Monday, an EPA health risk expert said connecting cancer and other health effects to dioxin is a difficult thing to do. Dr. Helen Dawson, chief of EPA's OSRTI Science Policy Branch in HQ, spoke at Monday night's meeting of the Saginaw-Tittabawassee Rivers Contamination Community Advisory Group on EPA's risk assessment process regarding dioxin. The *Saginaw News* article published in advance of Monday's CAG meeting quoted Dr. Dawson as saying research to show statistical significance linking dioxin to many health problems would take millions of people with regular exposure to the chemical. She stated: "We don't perform experiments with humans." Dawson talked about EPA's recently released 344-page dioxin reassessment. The large report found dioxin does have significant health effects, especially on children. Those include decreased sperm concentrations in men who were exposed to dioxin as children and increased thyroid-stimulating hormone levels in newborns exposed to dioxin in utero. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality toxicologist Deb MacKenzie-Taylor, who also was scheduled to attend the Monday meeting, said there are some rare effects from chemicals, such as chloracne, but general health problems like cancer or diabetes are more difficult to pin to a specific chemical. She stated: "When you have an effect that isn't rare in a population, it's harder to say ... whether a single case is caused by dioxin." Dr. Dawson said the EPA report did not address cancer effects from dioxin because the agency needed to look further into research. Dawson said the EPA is hoping to expeditiously release that cancer report. She stated: "They are working madly on finalizing the cancer reassessment."

Most Americans have low levels of dioxin exposure, and that is mostly through food, according to Dr. Dawson. The EPA assessment stated a reference dose for children, the most sensitive population, is 50 parts per trillion. The reference dose means people can be in regular contact with that chemical without a harmful effect. In Michigan, typical background soil concentrations range to 35 parts per trillion with an average of 6 to 7 parts per trillion. At Dow Chemical Co.'s Midland plant, dioxin contamination levels range from non-detect to more than 100,000 parts per trillion, according to EPA's data. The *News* article also quoted Michelle Hurd Riddick, a member of the Bay City-based environmental group Lone Tree Council, who said she was happy to hear the EPA's 50 parts per trillion reference dose. She said: "That number vindicates the MDEQ, which took political heat for suggesting a reference dose of 90 parts per trillion. A common safe level was thought to be 1,000 parts per trillion." Hurd Riddick said she's interested to see what the Michigan Department of Community Health fish advisories look like next year with the new information. That department stated it would use the new information for the 2013 advisories.

FYI: No EPA message

Contact: From *Saginaw News* article April 16; John Peterson, 312-886-9858, peterjohn@epa.gov

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Issue: Detroit Incinerator Title V Petition – Detroit

Background/Status: Last September the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center submitted a petition on behalf of 13 environmental and community groups asking EPA to object to the issuance of the Title V permit for the Detroit Renewable Power Waste Incinerator. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality issued the permit. Last December the city of Windsor and Essex County Environment Committee submitted a letter to EPA in support of this petition. Windsor and Essex County, Ontario, are downwind of the Detroit Incinerator. The Clean Air Act requires EPA to respond to this petition within 60 days so the Agency is late. Because of a national backlog, EPA averages about one year to answer these types of petitions.

Messages:

- EPA is still working on a response to this petition.

Contact: Susan Kraj, ARD, 312-353-2654, kraj.susan@epa.gov

Issue: EPA Has Issues with Michigan Ag Assurance Program – Statewide

Background/Status: The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program is a voluntary program that helps Michigan farmers evaluate their operation and make sustainable management decisions. If farmers meet the criteria for waste management, they can receive “verification” by the state. The State of Michigan currently has 1,000 farms that are certified through the MAEAP and an additional 5,000 working toward that certification. MAEAP was the focus of an Environmental Council of the States innovative project from 2002 through 2007. The project involved concentrated animal feeding operations. At the project’s conclusion, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality officials decided MAEAP did NOT provide an equivalent level of environmental protection as the Michigan National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program.

The first bills signed into law by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder in early 2011 were Michigan Public Acts No. 1 and No. 2 (PA 1 and 2). They incorporate MAEAP into Michigan’s Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Act. These Public Acts include provisions that appear to be inconsistent with Michigan’s approved NPDES program and federal NPDES program requirements. The PAs say if a Michigan farmer becomes MAEAP-certified, they are exempt from civil fines unless the violation involves a discharge. This provision violates NPDES program rules.

Region 5’s and Michigan DEQ’s water directors have been communicating on the issues, but a resolution is still not in sight. In July 2011, EPA asked MDEQ to provide an Attorney General’s statement that says the state laws as amended by PA 1 and 2 meet federal NPDES program requirements. EPA also requested additional information about how PA 1 and 2 affect Michigan’s authority to implement all or parts of the NPDES CAFO program. MDEQ responded by letter in December 2011 but did not provide the Attorney General’s statement. Water Division and ORC are preparing a second letter to request an Attorney General’s statement. The statement is necessary to help EPA decide whether to approve PA 1 and 2. Under NPDES program regulations, changes to state clean-water laws are subject to EPA approval.

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

Meanwhile, Michigan Department of Agriculture officials sent a letter to several government agencies including EPA inviting the agencies to enter into a partnership commitment with MAEAP. In a letter dated March 27 and copied to MDEQ, the EPA Regional Administrator said the Agency applauds Michigan's efforts to implement MAEAP to complement Michigan's NPDES program. However, the RA's letter was noncommittal about entering into a partnership and noted EPA "continues to assess the impact of the 2011 MAEAP legislation on the Michigan NPDES program."

Messages:

- EPA encourages voluntary programs that are proactive and improve environmental practices by farmers.
- EPA must ensure a balance between voluntary programs and the requirements of the Clean Water Act and its implementing regulations.
- EPA is reviewing Michigan Public Acts 1 and 2 to determine whether the state continues to have adequate authority to run the NPDES program.

Contact: Julianne Socha, Water, 312-886-4436, socha.julianne@epa.gov

Issue: EPA, Michigan Approve Sludge Energy Project – Lansing Area

Background/Status: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality late last month joined EPA in approving Delhi Township's plans to sell sludge from its wastewater plant for use as a biosolid fuel. Delhi Township is 11 miles south of Lansing. Michigan State University has told township officials it would be willing to buy a ton a day from the township's sewage facility to use in its campus power plant. However, a citizens group objecting to the project gathered enough petition signatures to force a May 8 special referendum. Critics say the township is spending too much on the plan when state shared revenue and property taxes are on the decline. If approved, the project would raise sewer rates by \$1.20 a month. EPA approved the township's plan last December.

Message:

- EPA rules strictly regulate the safety of biosolids for use as fertilizer and fuel.
- Thirty years ago, thousands of American cities dumped their raw sewage directly into our nation's rivers, lakes, and bays. Today, biosolids can be safely recycled for fuel, so EPA supports the efforts of municipalities such as Delhi Township.

Contact: *Lansing State Journal* article, John Peterson, OPA, 312-886-9858, peterjohn@epa.gov

Issue: Wolverine World Wide – Rockford/Grand Rapids Area

Background/Status: EPA and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality are evaluating the Wolverine World Wide former tannery site in Rockford because of a petition submitted by local residents. Rockford is 14 miles north of Grand Rapids. The community turned to EPA when Wolverine was unresponsive to its requests for information regarding pollutants leaching into surface waters and disposal of wastes during the demolition of the facility, a 100-year old tannery. The 15-acre site sits along the banks of the Rogue River and Rum Creek. Rockford's City Council has expressed support for Wolverine and concern that EPA's actions may adversely affect future redevelopment. EPA collaborated with Wolverine in sampling the site and surrounding sediment. EPA is planning to issue a 104(e) request letter this spring to obtain information regarding the facility's processes, waste characterization and waste disposal.

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

State Representative MacGregor has requested a briefing from MDEQ on the findings prior to releasing the preliminary assessment report.

Messages:

- EPA has sampled the site and surrounding sediment near the Rogue River and Rum Creek.
- EPA will host a community meeting on April 24.

Contact: Nuria Muñiz, Superfund, 312-886-4439, muniz.nuria@epa.gov

Issue: Childhood Cancers under Investigation – St. Clair County/S.E. Michigan

Background/Status: A larger-than-normal number of childhood cancers is being investigated by St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD), the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. St. Clair County (pop. 163,000) is 50 miles north of Detroit and considered part of the Detroit metro area. The county seat is Port Huron, Michigan. SCCHD has identified eight cases of a rare childhood cancer that affects the kidneys called Wilms Tumor. These cases were diagnosed during 2007-2011, and the number exceeds what would normally be expected based on national and state averages. SCCHD is also coordinating its investigation with neighboring Lambton County, Ontario. Wilms Tumor is highly responsive to surgery and subsequent treatment.

EPA is not involved in the investigation and has not received any inquiries from Michigan congressionals about the cases. The local, state and federal health agencies are doing epidemiology studies to try to find commonalities among the children. So far, they have not asked for environmental monitoring from EPA. Michigan Department of Environmental Quality early in the investigation reviewed its data for the area but has not been asked to do any follow-up.

Messages:

- EPA has not been asked to get involved in the St. Clair County cancer cases.
- Research has not found any strong links between Wilms Tumor and environmental factors, either during a mother's pregnancy or after a child's birth.

Contact: Maryann Suero, LCD, 312-886-9077, suero.maryann@epa.gov

Issue: Addition of Yard Waste to Michigan Landfills – Statewide

Background/Status: For the past several years, the Michigan Legislature has been considering reversing the ban on yard waste being placed in landfills as a way to generate more methane gas for energy production. Legislative hearings have been held on the issue recently. We understand that a few Michigan landfills have promoted the ban reversal. EPA has responded to several questions from Michigan Department of Environmental Quality by repeating the Agency's support for a yard waste ban in landfills.

Messages:

- Reversing Michigan's yard waste landfill ban would be inconsistent with preferred waste management methods that promote composting and create green jobs.
- The process of landfill degradation creates methane that has a higher greenhouse gas potential than the carbon dioxide created by composting.

MICHIGAN PROFILE

April 2012

- Landfill gas capture systems are not 100 percent effective. EPA estimates landfill gas collection systems only capture 60 to 90 percent at various times of operation.

Contact: Chris Newman, LCD, 312-353-8402, newman.christopherm@epa.gov

Issue: No Late Action on S.S. Badger – Ludington

Background/Status: There's been no new S.S. Badger news since EPA in February invited boat owner Lake Michigan Carferry to apply for an individual permit for coal ash discharge. EPA set a June 29 deadline for submitting an application, and company officials say they will meet that date. The reason for the summer deadline is that EPA wants the S.S. Badger to collect coal ash samples when the boat begins operating again this May. The Badger is the last coal-fired boat operating on the Great Lakes.

Messages

- The S.S. Badger cannot discharge coal ash after Dec. 19 unless it obtains a new NPDES permit.
- On Feb. 6, EPA required the Badger owners to apply for an individual permit for the coal ash discharges. EPA will prepare a draft permit based upon the application submitted.

Contact: Sean Ramach, Water, 312-886-5284, ramach.sean@epa.gov

###